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## Three Histories of One Slovakia

### Polish Interwar Writings on the Slovaks' Situation in the Face of the Collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy<sup>1</sup>

If we look through Polish library catalogues from the two decades after the establishment of the First Czechoslovak Republic, we will find dozens of works in Polish devoted to Poland's southern neighbour: some related to political, cultural, economic and historical issues, others conjuring up visions of that country's future. This interesting material enables us to reconstruct how Poles (more specifically, politicians, social activists, journalists, writers and people of science) approached the genesis of Czechoslovakia, including internal relations between Czechs and Slovaks, also remembering that for many centuries Slovakia was integrated into Hungary, whose territory shrunk significantly as a result of the Treaty of Trianon. The attitude towards Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary to some extent reflected the notions of Polish political and intellectual elites about the future balance of power in East Central Europe and what states (or political milieus in these states) Poland should have special relations with in the face of the danger posed by Germany and Bolshevik Russia. Slovakia played a role in these visions but, more importantly, ideas about the desired shape of future relations between Poland and its neighbours also impacted evaluations of Slovakia's past and its path to unification with Czechia.

On the basis of selected works published in interwar Poland, I will endeavour to reconstruct Polish authors' evaluations of the history of Slovaks

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before and during the First World War, that is, at the early stage of their political path. Naturally, it is impossible to present the entire literary and journalistic oeuvre of the studied period which touch on Slovakian problems. In particular, the press wrote a lot on the topic. However, it is not my intention to list all the works written in the Second Polish Republic, so I will limit myself to selected examples which clearly illustrate certain trends. This text will therefore be a review of Polish political and historical writings from the interwar period which were devoted to the birth of Czechoslovakia and addressed the role of Slovaks (both positive and negative) in that process.

It should be mentioned that the reality of that time, the political views of the authors, as well as the milieus in which they operated had a significant influence on the opinions they expressed. The variety of opinions I intend to show in this text indicates that this pivotal point in the history of the Slovak nation, that is, Slovakia's separation from Hungary and joining Czechia, contributed to establishing a discourse in the Second Polish Republic which abounded in various interpretations of the past and even polemics. In an attempt to systematise these writings about the creation of Czechoslovakia, I have grouped the works according to the major and most popular trends in interwar Poland. I discuss separately works written from the pro-Hungarian, pro-Czechoslovak and pro-Slovak perspective (in the latter group I distinguish the works written by historians and Slavists from the strictly political ones). I have developed this system of classification subjectively; I realise that these trends functioned concurrently and were not necessarily mutually exclusive in some aspects. I have also included Polish editions of Slovak and Czech works among Polish writings because it is my opinion that the very fact of translating and publishing the works in Poland meant that they became part of the Polish discourse.

Various aspects of the subject addressed in this article have already been analysed by other scholars. Piotr Godlewski wrote an interesting article about "The Polish Vision of Slovaks" in 1995. He distinguished three stages of how the image of Poland's neighbour developed: the Habsburg period, when an interest in Slovaks was born; the interwar period, when the interest in Slovakia became institutionalised; and the post-war period, when Slovaks were marginalised in favour of Czechs.<sup>2</sup> In 1999, Ewa Orlof summarised the entire 20<sup>th</sup>-century Polish historiography (historical works

2. P. Godlewski, *Polskie widzenie Słowaków*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 2 (1999), pp. 143–155.

and more) about Slovaks.<sup>3</sup> This work is in fact the longest bibliographical guide available so far; it mentions the main works of Polish authors who wrote about our southern neighbour in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it does not include many pro-Hungarian and pro-Czech/pro-Czechoslovak works, in which Slovaks were also discussed, although in a different context. The most extensive quotations from Polish interwar literature, including brochures, political journalism as well as memoirs, were collected by Michał Jagiełło in the last chapter of his monumental, two-volume work *Słowacy w polskich oczach* [*Slovaks in the Eyes of Poles*].<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, Remigiusz Kasprzycki noted that there was much less interest (both critical and favourable) in Czechs than in Slovaks. On several pages of his article on the image of Czechs and Slovaks painted by the Polish press in the Second Polish Republic, the author mainly, although not exclusively, showed voices favourable to Slovaks.<sup>5</sup> Daniel Łysek's article presents an approach which is monographic and rich in many accurate observations present in Polish political commentary works from the late period of partitions and the interwar period (until 1938).<sup>6</sup> The historian's findings paint a picture of the Polish public's generally favourable attitude towards the problem of Slovak separateness in the context of Slovaks' relations with Czechs (before the Great War and after the establishment of Czechoslovakia), although it is worth emphasising that the author also mentions a critical trend in Polish political commentary regarding Slovak separatism. Many of the works from the interwar period discussed in this article were also used by Mateusz Gniazdowski in his reconstruction of Polish-Slovak relations in the interwar period.<sup>7</sup>

3. E. Orlof, *Polskie badania słowacystyczne. Historiografia XX w.*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 3 (1998), pp. 87–101.
4. M. Jagiełło, *Słowacy w polskich oczach. Obraz Słowaków w piśmiennictwie polskim*, vol. 2, Warszawa–Nowy Targ 2005, pp. 295–377.
5. R. Kasprzycki, *Dobrzy i źli bracia. Obraz Czechów i Słowaków w publicystyce II Rzeczypospolitej*, "Zeszyty Prasoznawcze" 4 (2015), pp. 922–928.
6. D. Łysek, *Obraz Słowaków w polskiej publicystyce w I połowie XX wieku (do 1938 roku). Postrzeganie słowackiej odrębności w kontekście "czesko-słowackiej wzajemności" i czechosłowakizmu*, "Klio" 4 (2016), pp. 119–138.
7. M. Gniazdowski, *Obóz piłsudczykowski-sanacyjny wobec słowackiego ruchu autonomistycznego*, in: *Stosunki polsko-słowackie w I połowie XX wieku (materiały pokonferencyjne)*, ed. J. Głowińska, Wrocław 2006, pp. 28–45; idem, *Kwestia słowacka a polska idea "Trzeciej Europy"*, in: *Modernizacja, centrum, peryferie. Księga jubileuszowa z okazji 70. rocznicy urodzin Profesora Ryszarda Stemplowskiego*, eds. W. Borodziej, S. Dębski, Warszawa 2009, pp. 161–191; idem, "Zbliżowacia akcja".

However, rather than attempting to describe Polish-Slovak relations in the interwar period, the aim of this article is to characterise Polish writings from that period and the authors' attitude towards the problem of Slovakia's independence — or new dependence — within the Czechoslovak state. It is worth noting that Polish historiography paid a lot of attention to pro-Slovak (including pro-Magyar) literature, but as a counterbalance, it is also worth noting how pro-Czech literature treated the Slovak issue. This article will therefore endeavour to complement the current state of research by including works which, previously, were frequently omitted in studies, and by classifying works according to the authors' attitudes towards the history of Slovaks and the independence they achieved (or not) in 1918.

## 1. The Beginnings of the Discourse

Although prior to 1918 Slovakia was separated from Galicia by two boundaries. The natural one formed by the Carpathians and the interstate border dividing Cisleithania from Transleithania, Poles wrote about Slovaks long before the First World War. This problem has already been discussed in Polish literature by Antoni Giza, and more extensively by Michał Jagiełło.<sup>8</sup> Pro-Slovak sympathies, however, were part of a broader context — of Polish Slavophilism, whose main centre was the journal "Świat Słowiański" ["The Slavic World"], published by Feliks Konieczny in Kraków.<sup>9</sup> It was not until the establishment of Czechoslovakia as a new political entity on the map of Europe on 28 October 1918 that the Polish interest in Slovaks reached a breakthrough.

The difficult years of 1919–1920, in particular, forced Poles to assume a clear attitude towards their southern neighbour. Generally speaking, Czechoslovakia (or rather Czechs) were blamed for three things: 1. annexing the Silesian city of Cieszyn in January 1919, that is, during Poland's war against the West Ukrainian People's Republic, as well as parts of Spiš, Orava

*Predpoklady, rozvoj a výsledky pol'ského záujmu o Slovensko v medzivojnovom období, "Kontakty" 16 (2018), pp. 41–52.*

8. A. Giza, *Słowacja przełomu XIX i XX wieku w opisach polskich podróżników*, Szczecin 2004; M. Jagiełło, *Słowacy w polskich oczach...*, op. cit., vol. 1–2.
9. J.M. Roszkowski, *Stanowisko "Świata słowiańskiego" wobec sytuacji Słowaków i Polaków w Królestwie Węgierskim na początku XX w.*, in: *Od poznania do zrozumienia. Polacy, Czesi, Słowacy w XX wieku*, ed. E. Orłof, Rzeszów 1999, pp. 9–19; D. Łysek, *Obraz Słowaków...*, op. cit., pp. 121–129.

and Čadca;<sup>10</sup> 2. the position of the Czechoslovak Legions (commanded by General Jan Syrový), which — by calling a ceasefire with the Bolsheviks — contributed to the enforced evacuation of the Polish 5<sup>th</sup> Rifle Division from Siberia and its subsequent capitulation in January 1920;<sup>11</sup> 3. a lack of Czechoslovakia's support (e.g. blocking weapon transports) during the war with the Bolsheviks in 1919–1920, which raised fears that it would become Russia's ally and surround Poland in the south and east (the so-called Czech-Russian or Czech-Ukrainian-Russian corridor, which endangered Poland's position in the region<sup>12</sup>). Also not insignificant in this regard was the Czech friendliness towards the West Ukrainian People's Republic, which raised the Polish government's concerns.<sup>13</sup> At that time, history was written "on the spot" mainly by Polish newspapers. As early as 1920, an anthology of press texts was published, entitled *Niebezpieczeństwo korytarza czesko-rosyjskiego* [*The Threats Posed by the Czech-Russian Corridor*].<sup>14</sup> It is hardly surprising that the Polish-Czech rivalry for the disputed territories in Cieszyn Silesia during the plebiscite campaign in 1920, while Poland was also fighting against the Bolsheviks, caused extreme emotions. At that time, brochures were published, directed mainly to Poles in Cieszyn Silesia, which were critical of relations in Czechoslovakia, not only with regard to the position

10. Cf. M.K. Kamiński, *Początki polsko-czeskiego konfliktu po pierwszej wojnie światowej*, "Kwartalnik Historyczny" 1 (2000), pp. 66, 71; K. Gawron, *Stosunki polsko-czechosłowackie w latach 1918–1939 jako przyczynek do badań nad konfederacją polsko-czechosłowacką 1939–1943*, in: *Wiek XX. Studia z historii myśli politycznej i idei*, ed. P. Tomaszewski, Toruń 2004, pp. 48–50; P. Kołakowski, *Kwestia ukraińska w relacjach polsko-czechosłowackich w latach 1918–1935*, "Słupskie Studia Historyczne" 13 (2007), pp. 248–249; idem, *Polsko-czechosłowackie walki o Śląsk Cieszyński w styczniu 1919 roku*, "Słupskie Studia Historyczne" 18 (2012), pp. 196, 209.
11. Cf. W. Nawrocki, *W Polsce o Szwejku i szwejkizmie*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 3 (2003), pp. 8–9; D. Radziwiłłowicz, *Rola Korpusu Czechosłowackiego w wojnie domowej w Rosji*, "Przegląd Wschodnioeuropejski" 1 (2010), pp. 107–108; D. Bienias, "Łodowy Marsz" V Dywizji Syberyjskiej oraz okoliczności powrotu jej żołnierzy do Polski na statku "Jarosław", "Zesłaniec" 51 (2012), pp. 40–43, 45–48.
12. Cf. S.M. Nowinowski, *Polsko-czechosłowackie stosunki dyplomatyczne podczas wojny 1920 roku*, "Acta Universitatis Lodzensis. Folia Historica" 62 (1998), pp. 64–67.
13. Cf. H. Walczak, *Stanowisko polskich ugrupowań politycznych wobec Czechosłowacji w latach 1918–1925*, Szczecin 1999, pp. 24–28.
14. *Niebezpieczeństwo korytarza czesko-rosyjskiego. Konieczność granicy polsko-węgierskiej. Co mówi o tem prasa polska? (z 2 mapami)*, Warszawa 1920. This volume is commented on by E. Orlof, *Polskie badania słowacystyczne...*, op. cit., pp. 88–89 and P. Eberhardt, *Wizja korytarza czesko-rosyjskiego według polskich map z 1920 roku*, "Studia Geohistorica" 2 (2014), pp. 99–106.

of the Polish population but also the Slovak one. At the same time, agitation was carried out among the Polish-speaking, but indifferent in terms of nationality, populations of Spiš and Orava, while sightseeing societies and academic circles conducted lively publishing activity with regard to the so-called "Southern Borderland."<sup>15</sup> In short, the relations between the newly established states, Poland and Czechoslovakia, were shaped in an atmosphere of conflict from the very outset.

Although these events go beyond the moment of the Habsburg Monarchy's collapse which is of interest to us here, they did contribute to the creation of many Polish works critical of Czechs. Emotions related to border disputes would not die down until a few years later. An example of a distanced publication which endeavoured to explain in great detail the extent of the losses suffered by the Polish state to the benefit of Czechoslovakia was Stanisław Raubał's book *Granica polityczna polsko-czechosłowacka* [*The Polish-Czechoslovak Political Border*], which came out only in 1927.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. Slovakia and Polish-Hungarian Relations

In the light of the aggravated relations between Poland and Czechoslovakia, the only dependable partner in the region for Poland, which was defending itself against the Bolsheviks at the time, seemed to be Hungary, with which Poles were connected by centuries of neighbourly relations and cooperation. As early as 1919, Włodzimierz Tetmajer, an artist, but most importantly a politician and an expert during the Paris Peace Conference, wrote in a brochure entitled *Istota sporu polsko-czeskiego* [*The Essence of the Polish-Czech Dispute*]<sup>17</sup> about the need for a bold Polish policy which would lead to Poland controlling two seas. First, however, according to the author, Czech imperialist aspirations should be stopped and Slovakia should be freed from their rule and re-attached to Hungary.

The only realistic candidate for a political partner for the young Polish state proved to be Andrej Hlinka, the leader of the Slovak People's Party

15. M. Jagiełło, *Słowacy w polskich oczach...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 299–322; P. Jakubec, *Formovanie československo-poľskej hraničnej čiary (s dôrazom na jej spišský úsek) počas Parížskej mierovej konferencie, 1919–1920*, "Slovanský Přehled" 5 (2010), pp. 606–607; J.M. Roszkowski, "Zapomniane Kresy". *Spisz, Orawa, Czadeckie w świadomości i działaniach Polaków 1895–1925*, Nowy Targ 2018, pp. 349–358.

16. S. Raubał, *Granica polityczna polsko-czechosłowacka*, Warszawa 1927.

17. W. Tetmajer, *Istota sporu czesko-polskiego*, Kraków 1919.

(*Slovenská ľudová strana*) backed by a large portion of the Slovak people, and a supporter of Slovak autonomy. Already in 1919, relations were established between Józef Piłsudski and Andrej Hlinka and his followers. The Polish government backed him and František Jehlička by issuing Polish passports to them so that they could participate in the Versailles Peace Conference and demand the support of the Great Powers for Slovak political aspirations.<sup>18</sup> After his unsuccessful trip to Paris, Hlinka was arrested on his return to Czechoslovakia, while Jehlička first travelled to Budapest, where he presented a plan for Slovak autonomy within the Hungarian state to the Hungarian government, and then in Warsaw he lobbied for the creation of Polish-Hungarian military alliance aimed at regaining "Upper Hungary" by Budapest. He even became the Prime Minister of the "interim national government of the Slovak Republic" created on 25 May 1921 in Kraków by another Slovak political émigré — František Unger.<sup>19</sup> However, the Hungarians never implemented that plan, so Jehlička had to remain in Warsaw, where he found employment as a lecturer at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Warsaw. During his stay in Poland, he published extensively (e.g. in the *Slovák* journal published by Unger in Zakopane), popularising the postulate of detaching Slovakia from Czechoslovakia.<sup>20</sup> Jehlička's article entitled *Problem słowacki* ["The Slovak Problem"], published in "Przegląd Katolicki" [The Catholic Review] in 1921 and republished a year later as a stand-alone booklet, was written in a similar spirit.<sup>21</sup> The author formulated a number of complaints against Czechs, accusing them of attempted Czechisation of Slovaks, compromising the eastern part's economy, and discrimination against the Catholic Church. Jehlička saw Catholic Poland as an ally against secular Czechs, who were negotiating with the Second Polish Republic's mortal enemy, Bolshevik Russia.

18. A. Szklarska-Lohmannowa, *Polsko-czechosłowackie stosunki dyplomatyczne w latach 1918–1925*, Wrocław—Warszawa—Kraków 1967, pp. 123–124; M. Gniazdowski, *Obóz piłsudczykowski-sanacyjny...*, op. cit., pp. 28–29; Ł. Lewkowicz, *Słowacja w polityce zagranicznej II Rzeczypospolitej — zarys problematyki*, in: *Między Rosją a Niemcami. Dyplomacja środkowoeuropejska w XX wieku*, vol. 1, ed. E. Alabru-dzińska, Toruń 2014, p. 150.

19. A. Szklarska-Lohmannowa, *Polsko-czechosłowackie stosunki dyplomatyczne...*, op. cit., p. 128.

20. I. Janek, *František Jehlička and his activity in support of the Hungarian revision in Czechoslovakia in 1919–1938*, "Dvacáté Století" 2 (2015), pp. 43–55.

21. F. Jehlička, *Problem słowacki (stosunki na południowej granicy Polski)*, Warszawa 1922.

In the following years, Jehlička moved to Vienna and then to Geneva, where (in July 1933) he created the Slovak National Council (*Slovenská rada*) together with Viktor Dvorčák, a former Slovak member of the Hungarian Parliament in the times of the Habsburgs, and later the president of the short-lived Slovak People's Republic (December 1918). This organisation worked towards organising a plebiscite in which Slovaks were going to determine whether they still wanted to live in the same state with Czechs. He deeply hoped that Slovakia would ultimately return to Hungary.<sup>22</sup> When in 1934 "Nasza Przyszłość" ["Our Future"] published Józef Gołąbek's article which showed the past Magyar rule over Slovaks in an unfavourable light, Jehlička sent in a text entitled *Quo Vadis Słowaczyno?* [*Quo Vadis Slovak Land?*], published both in the magazine and as a separate copy.<sup>23</sup> He disagreed with Gołąbek's views and showed positive aspects of Slovakia remaining under the Hungarian rule, contrasting these relations with the supremacist, according to the author, attitude of Czechs towards the Slovak population after the First World War. Interestingly, Jehlička's text did not lack criticism towards the leaders of the Slovak nationalist movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including Ľudovít Štúr. He criticised them for their Panslavic views and their willingness to forsake the Slovak language and religion and to unite with Russians. He cited fears of Panslavism as an explanation why Budapest had pursued a Magyarisation policy in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, in the discussed publication, the author mainly focused on enumerating the wrongs that Czechs committed against Slovaks (and the Catholic Church).

"Nasza Przyszłość" published more texts in a similar spirit. For instance, *Rola Słowaczyny w militarnym sojuszu Czechów z bolszewicką Rosją (tragedja narodu słowackiego)* ["The Role of Slovak Lands in the Czechs' Military Alliance with Bolshevik Russia (The Tragedy of the Slovak Nation)"], penned by "Slovak,"<sup>24</sup> largely repeated the content of *Quo Vadis Słowaczyno?*, which indicates that the author might have been either Jehlička himself or somebody from his circle. The Slovak politician and political commentator was allegedly put in contact with "Nasza Przyszłość" by a well-known Germanophile and Magyarophile, Władysław Gizbert Studnicki.<sup>25</sup>

22. I. Janek, *František Jehlička...*, op. cit., p. 52.

23. F. Jehliczka, *Quo Vadis Słowaczyno?*, Warszawa [1935].

24. "Słowak", *Rola Słowaczyny w militarnym sojuszu Czechów z bolszewicką Rosją (tragedja narodu słowackiego)*, "Nasza Przyszłość" 47 (1936), pp. 70–109.

25. Cf. M. Gniazdowski, *Kwestia słowacka...*, op. cit., p. 171.



In any case, Czech anti-Catholicism aimed against the Catholic Church in Slovakia was often mentioned in publications of Magyarophiles. One example is an article written by František Unger, entitled *Dlaczego Czesi nienawidzą Polski i Polaków?* [Why Do Czechs Hate Poland and Poles?],<sup>26</sup> published by "Nasza Przyszłość" in 1937. According to the author, the views expressed by Tomáš Masaryk already before the First World War were at the root of the anti-religious policies of the Czechoslovak state.

Not only Slovak political émigrés, but also Polish conservatists called for Poland's cooperation with Hungary in the interwar period. These circles called for re-establishing the old Polish-Hungarian border by detaching Slovakia or at least Carpathian Ruthenia from Czechoslovakia. The main exponents of this cause were Marian Zdziechowski and Jan Dąbrowski.<sup>27</sup> Zdziechowski, (a former activist of the Slavic Club (*Klub Słowiański*) in Kraków, historian, literary scholar and lecturer at the University of Vilnius in the interwar period) believed Poland's alliance with Hungary to be one of the most important goals of Polish politics in general, and he considered the division of Hungary in Trianon as a great wrong done to Budapest. As early as 1920, in his work *Tragedja Węgier a polityka polska* [Hungary's Tragedy and Polish Politics],<sup>28</sup> he argued that Slovakia was incorporated into Czechia by force. Citing Jehlička, he claimed that Slovaks themselves would have wanted to remain in the Hungarian state with which they shared their Catholic faith. Therefore, he postulated returning Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia to Hungary. Zdziechowski presented his views on Hungary in more detail in 1933 in his work *Węgry i dookoła Węgier* [Hungary and Around Hungary].<sup>29</sup> It did not lack criticism against Czechoslovakia and especially its President, Tomáš Masaryk, who, according to the author, believed Slovakia to be a "branch of Czechia," which is why he carried out agitation there before and during the First World War. Zdziechowski believed that convincing Slovaks to accept the idea of Czechoslovakism gave Czechs a numerical advantage in the multi-ethnic state, in which the German and Magyar communities constituted large minorities.

26. F. Unger, *Dlaczego Czesi nienawidzą Polski i Polaków?*, "Nasza Przyszłość" 53 (1937), pp. 38–45.

27. M. Koźmiński, *O stosunkach politycznych polsko-węgierskich w okresie międzywojennym (1918–1939)*, in: *Przyjaźnie i antagonizmy. Stosunki Polski z państwami sąsiednimi w latach 1918–1939*, ed. J. Żarnowski, Wrocław 1977, pp. 280–281.

28. M. Zdziechowski, *Tragedja Węgier a polityka polska*, Wilno 1920, pp. 38–39.

29. Idem, *Węgry i dookoła Węgier. Szkice polityczno-literackie*, Wilno 1933.

On the other hand, Jan Dąbrowski, a Kraków-based historian who studied the history of Hungary, in his synthetic work *Węgry [Hungary]*<sup>30</sup> from 1924 wrote that Slovakia was (in an analogy to the history of the partitions of Poland) "a Czech partition." He believed, however, that Czechs were weak enough there that a revision of borders could start in that state. The work included many critical opinions about Czechs and the state they created at the expense of Upper Hungary and Carpathian Ruthenia.

Finally, we should also mention Władysław Studnicki. In his work *Kwestja Czechosłowacji a racja stanu Polski [The Problem of Czechoslovakia and the Polish Raison d'Etat]*<sup>31</sup> published in 1938 (twice, before and after the Treaty of Munich), the author accused Czechs of planning to assimilate Slovaks even before the First World War (e.g. the activity of the Československá jednota organisation), and then showed the steps which led to the establishment of Czechoslovakia as a cunning Czech plan. He explained the emergence of an autonomist movement in Slovakia as discontent with Czech domination in the united state, and he saw a return to Hungary (Poland's ally) as the only reasonable alternative for Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia.

To sum up, it should be said that from the viewpoint of pro-Hungarian Poles Slovakia was interesting only inasmuch as it could be useful for building a Polish-Hungarian alliance and breaking up Czechoslovakia. It was therefore the object, not the subject of their political reflections.

For different reasons, pro-Czech Poles also treated Slovakia in a similar way, i.e. as an object.

### 3. Supporters of Cooperation with Czechoslovakia

Despite the difficult relations with Czechoslovakia during the first years of independence, there was no lack of people in Poland who wanted to improve them. First of all, the disagreeable memories of the Polish-Czech relations in 1919–1920 needed to be erased. In 1924, Józef Białynia Chołodecki,<sup>32</sup> a well-known writer and political commentator from Lviv, an amateur historian and author of dozens of works, including one on the Polish military

30. J. Dąbrowski, *Węgry*, Kraków 1924.

31. W. Studnicki, *Kwestja Czechosłowacja a racja stanu Polski*, Warszawa 1938; idem, *Kwestja Czechosłowacja a racja stanu Polski*, Warszawa 1938.

32. K. Lewicki, *Chołodecki Białynia Józef Dominik*, in: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 3, Kraków 1937, pp. 403–404.

science of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, published his *Zborów. Pole chwały czesko-słowackiego oręża* [Zboriv: A Field of Glory of the Czech-Slovak Army]<sup>33</sup> devoted to the Battle of Zboriv (2 July 1917). The book, which referred to the famous battle fought by the Polish army against the Cossacks in 1649, depicted the history of the Czechoslovak Legions in a favourable light. However, neither the Slovaks' role in the Legions nor the controversial events in Siberia were the main subject of the book. The topic dividing Poles and Czechs was revisited at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s. In 1927, a very popular Polish writer Wacław Sieroszewski published a novel entitled *Dalaj-Lama* [The Dalai-Lama]<sup>34</sup> in which he very critically depicted the figure of General Jan Syrový and the Czechoslovak Legions. The book provoked a response of Polish pro-Czech circles. In 1929, they printed a translation of an academic study written by Józef Kudela (first published by "Slovanský přehled" ["Slavonic Review"] in Prague), devoted to Polish and Czechoslovak military personnel in Russia in 1914–1921.<sup>35</sup> In the introduction, it was stressed that Sieroszewski's work "incited hatred of the Czech nation,"<sup>36</sup> so, as a counterbalance, a source-based monograph was published in response. Kudela's work was soon criticised by a Polish officer, Włodzimierz Scholze-Srokowski, as exonerating Czechs from blame against Poles.<sup>37</sup>

In this discussion, however, Slovaks receded into the background. Slovak soldiers were believed to be an element of a larger whole – the Czechoslovak Legions – which consequently contributed to the establishment of Czechoslovakia.

France, which was trying to find strong Central European allies who could counterbalance Germany, was particularly interested in cooperation (including military one) between Poland and Czechoslovakia in the 1920s. Although a planned Polish-Czechoslovak alliance did not come to be,<sup>38</sup> in 1925–1926 the impasse in political relations was overcome thanks to bilateral

33. J. Białynia Chołodecki, *Zborów. Pole chwały czesko-słowackiego oręża*, Lwów 1924.

34. W. Sieroszewski, *Dalaj-Lama. Powieść*, vol. 1–2, Kraków 1927.

35. J. Kudela, *Czechosłowackie i polskie wojsko w Rosji*, Warszawa 1929.

36. Ibidem, p. 5.

37. W. Scholze-Srokowski, *Józef Kudela, Czechosłowackie i polskie wojsko w Rosji. Warszawa 1929. Nakładem Hoesicka* [review], "Bellona" 12 (36/1930), pp. 462–464. In the same issue of "Bellona," the author presented his study: idem, *Wojsko polskie na Syberji*, "Bellona" 36 (1930), pp. 465–505.

38. J. Kozeński, *Próby zbliżenia polsko-czechosłowackiego w latach 1926–1931*, "Przegląd Zachodni" 2 (1964), pp. 310–327; A. Essen, *Stosunki polsko-czechosłowackie 1925–1934. Szanse i zaniechania*, in: *Od poznania do zrozumienia...*, op. cit.,

visits of both countries' Foreign Ministers, Aleksander Skrzyński and Edvard Beneš.<sup>39</sup> Good relations were maintained after Piłsudski's May Coup in 1926, even though the Chief of State did not have positive feelings towards Czechs.<sup>40</sup> However, as long as August Zaleski, friendly towards Czechs, was the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs (1926–1932), Polish-Czechoslovak societies could thrive in Poland; they included the Polish-Czechoslovak Society (*Towarzystwo Polsko-Czechosłowackie*) in Poznań (est. 1923) and in Kraków (est. 1932). In 1932, a Negotiating Committee of Polish-Czechoslovak Societies (*Komitet Porozumiewawczy Towarzystw Polsko-Czechosłowackich*) was established in Warsaw with a branch office in Poznań, but its activity soon slowed down when the position of Foreign Minister was taken over by Józef Beck, who had a completely different view on Polish relations with the southern neighbour.<sup>41</sup>

In the second half of the 1920s and throughout the 1930s, a lot was written about Czechoslovakia and there were attempts to warm up its image. The authors who wrote about the history of Poland's southern neighbour could not ignore the Slovak issue and Slovaks' attitude towards Czechoslovakism. The first attempt to popularise the history of Czechoslovakia as a whole was Jerzy Kurnatowski's work; the author was a Polish lawyer and economist, the founder and member of the board of the Polish-Czechoslovakian Society in Kraków and later an honorary member of the Czech-Polish Society in Prague (*Československo-polská společnost*).<sup>42</sup> He pursued closer Polish-Czech relations and believed the Polish minority in Czechoslovakia to be a bridge leading to concord between Poles and Czechs. In 1926, he published an extensive work entitled *Czechosłowacja i Czechosłowacy* [*Czechoslovakia and Czechoslovaks*],<sup>43</sup> written "to celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary

pp. 69–88; B. Szymankiewicz, *Koncepcje sojuszy polsko-czechosłowackich*, "Historia Slavorum Occidentalis" 1 (2013), pp. 167–168.

39. J. Kozeński, *Czechosłowacja w polskiej polityce zagranicznej w latach 1932–1938*, Poznań 1964, pp. 27–31.

40. J. Dejmek, *Edvard Beneš a Polska międzywojenna (Uwagi w związku z jednym z aspektów polityki zagranicznej Beneša)*, "Dzieje Najnowsze" 3 (2000), pp. 104–105.

41. J. Kozeński, *Towarzystwo polsko-czechosłowackie w Poznaniu w latach 1923–39*, "Przegląd Zachodni" 2 (1960), pp. 337–346; idem, *Czechosłowacja...*, op. cit., p. 31.

42. S. Konarski, *Kurnatowski Jerzy Karol*, in: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 16, Wrocław 1971, p. 244; T. Marszał, *Jerzy Karol Kurnatowski (1874–1934)*, "Biuletyn Szadkowski" 5 (2005), pp. 14–15; T. Sikorski, *Jerzy Karol Kurnatowski (1874–1934). Solidaryzm, kooperatyzm i pomoc wzajemna*, Szczecin 2018, pp. 27–28.

43. J. Kurnatowski, *Czechosłowacja i Czechosłowacy*, Frysztat 1926.

of the death of Louis II of Hungary and Bohemia. 1526—1926." The idea behind the book was to encourage cooperation between Poland and Czechia, which, in the context of chaos in Russia, faced a historical need "to prepare a joint organisation of Eastern Slavdom and removing Germans from it."<sup>44</sup> The author stressed the role that Ľudovít Štúr, Jozef Miloslav Hurban and Michal Miloslav Hodža played in Slovak culture, but at the same time noted that Slovaks, threatened by Magyar nationalism, did find "help and courage" in Czechs in the times of the Habsburgs. Therefore, Slovaks "from the very beginning of the war have acted hand in hand with Czechs both in the country and abroad,"<sup>45</sup> which led to the need to build a mutual state.

Other authors wrote about Slovak national culture with much more distance, always emphasising those figures whose life reflected "Czech-Slovak mutuality." For instance, the Slavist and translator Jan Magiera, associated with the Polish-Czechoslovak Society in Kraków,<sup>46</sup> in his lecture given at the Jagiellonian University and published in a stand-alone booklet entitled *Od Białej Góry do Republiki Czechosłowackiej* [*From Bílá Hora to the Czech Republic*]<sup>47</sup> clearly accused the Slovak Romantic Ľudovít Štúr of breaking up the Czech-Slovak unity which, according to the author, had lasted continuously until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. He saw Ján Kollár and Pavol Jozef Šafárik, among others, as the true heroes of Czech and Slovak cultural life. He mainly emphasised those cultural and political activities which contributed to the unification of Slovaks and Czechs. Jan Magiera also expressed his literary views in a compendium entitled *Literatura czeska i słowacka* [*Czech and Slovak Literature*],<sup>48</sup> where he devoted disproportionately less space to Slovak writers and their works than to Czech ones, but which was still the most extensive description of the Slovak literary achievements in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries published in Poland until then. The author was not as critical towards Štúr in this work, but his pro-Czech sympathies were clearly conspicuous.

Poles could finally read a synthetic, extensive history of Bohemia and Slovakia in 1928. The authors of almost two-hundred pages of

44. Ibidem, p. 6.

45. Ibidem, p. 81.

46. W. Grzybek, *Magiera Jan Franciszek*, in: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 19, Wrocław 1974, p. 134.

47. J. Magiera, *Od Białej Góry do Republiki Czechosłowackiej. Odczyt wygłoszony w "Powszechnych wykładach Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego" w 1927 r.*, Kraków [1927].

48. Idem, *Literatura czeska i słowacka*, Warszawa 1929.

*Od Przemysława do Masaryka* [From Přemysl to Masaryk]<sup>49</sup> were Żeliszew Grotowski (an economist and economic historian) and Jan Hanusz. The authors wanted to forge a Polish-Czechoslovak alliance first, and then an economic union, so the book mainly emphasised Polish-Czech relations over the ages. Slovaks were in fact pushed to the back, as reflected by the summary of Slovak cultural achievements in the times of the Habsburgs, which was described in only a few sentences. On the other hand, the authors expressed a positive view of the "Hlas" ["The Voice"] magazine, which promoted Czech-Slovak bonds and of Slovaks cooperation with Czechs during the First World War (the Czechoslovak Legions, the Battle of Zboriv, General Milan Rastislav Štefánik). However, the authors were quite critical of Slovak communists (this topic is relatively rarely addressed by other authors), who wanted to "sink Czechoslovak independence in the sea of Bolshevism."<sup>50</sup> The authors saw the establishment of Czechoslovakia as the result of coordinated Czech and Slovak actions. They were critical of the Slovak autonomist movement, calling it "Slovak irredentism," which was — according to the authors — not supported by the Slovak society, and a tool in the Hungarian hands.

Another work which revealed a negative attitude towards Hungarians was a book published in 1933 in the *Biblioteczka Słowiańska* [The Slavic Library] series by above-mentioned Kurnatowski, entitled *Czesi i Słowacy* [Czechs and Slovaks].<sup>51</sup> The author described the actions of Hungarian "Magyarisationists" of education, led by the Minister of Education, Count Albert Apponyi, which were particularly hard on Slovaks. According to Kurnatowski, Magyarisation was the main reason for an increase in hatred towards the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and Slovaks' turn towards Czechs was allegedly dictated by the defeats of the Russian army, on which Slovaks had pinned their hopes of bettering their life. The author wrote that the "bilingual Czechoslovak nation" was born on 14 November 1918, during the first national assembly — the constituent assembly in which delegates from Czech and Slovakia participated. Kurnatowski defended the idea of Czechoslovakism, citing the example of the Swiss, who created one nation even though they used different languages. By analogy, to Kurnatowski,

49. Ż. Grotowski, J. Hanusz, *Od Przemysława do Masaryka (Rys historyczny) (Czechy mocarstwowe — odrodzenie narodowe — Republika Czechosłowacka)*, Kraków 1928.

50. Ibidem, p. 98.

51. J. Kurnatowski, *Czesi i Słowacy*, Warszawa 1933.

after 1918 Slovaks were only a language group of the Czechoslovak nation, in which "the Czechoslovak self-identification much exceeds the Slovak one."<sup>52</sup>

An important achievement of Polish pro-Czech writers was the publication of *Związłe dzieje Czechosłowacji* [A Brief History of Czechoslovakia] in 1934, written by the Czech deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kamil Krofta, and translated by Jan Magiera.<sup>53</sup> In this book, the role of Slovaks was marginalised even more than in the works mentioned earlier. The author, in agreement with the doctrine prevailing in Czechoslovakia, called Slovaks just "a branch of the Czechoslovak nation" and wrote about it: "although this branch had been growing for centuries in connection with the Hungarian crown, detached from the Czech state, the awareness of linguistic and national unity with the Czech branch of its nation never died off completely (...)." <sup>54</sup> The author criticised prominent Slovak nationalists active in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century for their wish to look for cultural development opportunities while counting on Hungarians' consent, which only ended up in more severe Magyarisation. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the author already saw "increased Slovak awareness of national unity with Czechs."<sup>55</sup> As such, *Związłe dzieje Czechosłowacji* popularised in Poland the thesis that a Czechoslovak nation existed.

Finally, we should also mention the key activist of the movement analysed here, Kazimierz Kierski, a doctor of law and politician who successfully headed the Polish-Czechoslovak Society in Poznań since 1931, and a year later became the vice-president of the Negotiating Committee of all Polish-Czech Societies in Poland, for which he was awarded the Order of the White Lion (*Řád Bílého lva*).<sup>56</sup> He included his *credo* in the book *Problemat polsko-czeski* [The Polish-Czech Problem], in which he wrote that "we should unite, not go our separate ways,"<sup>57</sup> by which the author understood creating an economic union and a close Polish-Czechoslovak alliance to counterbalance Germany. However, he was even better known for publishing *Masaryk a Polska* [Masaryk and Poland], which came out in 1934 and then

52. Ibidem, p. 15.

53. K. Krofta, *Związłe dzieje Czechosłowacji*, transl. J. Magiera, Kraków 1934.

54. Ibidem, p. 97.

55. Ibidem, p. 125.

56. E. Muszalski, *Kierski Kazimierz*, in: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 12, Wrocław 1966–1967, p. 429.

57. K. Kierski, *Problemat polsko-czeski*, Poznań 1931, p. 14.

again a year later, expanded from 42 to 102 pages, in which he presented the Czechoslovak politician in the most favourable light.<sup>58</sup> In neither of these works did the author devote much attention to Slovaks. It was not until 1938, in a brochure *Kwestja słowacka w przededniu rozstrzygnięcia* [*The Slovak Problem on the Eve of a Resolution*],<sup>59</sup> that the author proved himself to be a critic of the postulate of Slovak autonomy. Kierski devoted his entire publication to the defence of a united, centralised Czechoslovak state. He also tried to counter arguments expressed by Zbigniew Jakubski, the Polish deputy consul in Bratislava, whose work will be mentioned later on. The bone of contention between these authors was the interpretation of the provisions of the agreement between Czech and Slovak emigration societies in Pittsburgh in the USA (31 May 1918), where Slovakia was to be guaranteed a status equal to Czechia in the planned state. Kierski, based on Masaryk's words, completely underestimated the significance of this document, calling it a "local" settlement (not an agreement!) between American Slovaks and Czechs. For Kierski, a model Slovak politician was Milan Hodža, who served many times as a minister and as Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia in 1935–1938, whom he contrasted with Hlinka as a true authority. The author also disagreed with supporters of the pro-Hungarian option, arguing that Slovaks' economic situation under the Hungarian rule was terrible. He started writing his work before the Treaty of Munich and finished it on 22 October 1938, so in the conclusion of his work we can find a number of his doubts about the future fate of Slovakia, now ruled by autonomists.

#### 4. Slavists and Slovakia

The Polish interest in Czechoslovakia, including Slovaks, followed from a more general interest in Polish Slavic studies and Slavophilism, which had a long tradition. As early as 1924, Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, a Polish linguist associated with the University of Warsaw, who was known as a researcher of the Slovak language sympathetic to the people,<sup>60</sup> in his article in "Głos Polski" ["The Voice of Poland"], tried to answer the question

58. Idem, *Masaryk a Polska*, Poznań 1934; idem, *Masaryk a Polska*, Poznań 1935.

59. Idem, *Kwestja słowacka w przededniu rozstrzygnięcia*, Poznań 1938.

60. K. Nitsch, *Baudouin de Courtenay Jan*, in: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 1, Kraków 1935, pp. 359–362; M. Papierz, *Jan Baudouin de Courtenay i Słowacy*, "LingVaria" 2 (2009), pp. 201–208.



whether it was possible to talk about the existence of the Czechoslovak nation in view of the establishment of Czechoslovakia.<sup>61</sup> His answer, preceded by a comparison of other analogous cases of neighbouring nations in Europe, was negative. He claimed that "the long history created two literary languages, Czech and Slovak, and two nations, Czech and Slovak." He noted the risk of denationalising Slovaks in the new state, citing the analogy with the Hungarian period.

He was not the only Polish scholar to consider Slovakia's place in the new state. In 1927, the Slavic Society (*Towarzystwo Słowiańskie*) was re-established in Kraków, which gathered many people of science working professionally on Slavic problems in terms of linguistics, ethnography, literature and history. Slovaks as a nation perforce belonged to the area of Slavists' interests, both from the older and younger generation.

At this point it is worth mentioning the person who played a key role in shaping Polish Slavic studies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Henryk Batowski, a graduate of modern language studies at John Casimir University in Lviv, who later became a well-known historian. His views regarding the southern neighbour evolved during his lifetime. When he was still a student, Batowski became known as an activist in many societies at the Lviv University (including the JCU Students' Slavist Club (*Koło Slawistyczne Studentów UJK*), the Bulgarian-Polish Society (*Towarzystwo Bułgarsko-Polskie*), the Academic Club of Friends of Czechoslovakia (*Akademickie Koło Przyjaciół Czechosłowacji*) and the Academic Club of Friends of Yugoslavia (*Akademickie Koło Przyjaciół Jugosławii*), who worked towards their integration.<sup>62</sup> He believed that it was possible to work out an alliance between Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, perhaps also Bulgaria, as a counterbalance to other non-Slavic nations (Germans, Magyars) and Russians.<sup>63</sup> He expressed his vision of Slavic mutuality in "Bellona" magazine in 1930. In a text entitled "Wzajemność słowiańska. Problemy polityczne i kulturalne w przeszłości i teraźniejszości" ["Slavic Mutuality. Political and Cultural Problems in the Past and at

61. J. Baudouin de Courtenay, *Czy istnieje naród i język czechosłowacki?*, "Głos Polski" 158 (1924), p. 1.

62. S. Grudzień, *Działalność akademicka Henryka Batowskiego we Lwowie (1925–1927)*, "Historia i Polityka" 1 (8/2009), pp. 133–150.

63. Idem, *Henryk Batowski a współpraca słowiańska (do 1939 roku)*, in: *Henryk Batowski 1907–1999. Materiały z Sesji Naukowej PAU w dniu 18 kwietnia 2000 r.*, ed. R. Majkowska, Kraków 2003, pp. 35–54.

Present”],<sup>64</sup> he wrote about Štúr, Hurban and Hodža causing a “schism” with Czechs in order to fall in line with Magyar policies. A year later, in his treatise *Unia czesko-słowacka* [*The Czech-Slovak Union*],<sup>65</sup> the author started to discuss the stages of establishing the Czechoslovak state. He found the genesis of the process as early as 1848, when Slovaks established closer cooperation with Czechs. Batowski's work also included an overview of the Hungarian state's Magyarisation policy, Slovaks' cooperation with Czechs before the First World War and all political agreements between activists of both nationalities during and after the First World War. Batowski devoted quite a lot of space to an analysis of the Pittsburgh Agreement, a key event which had a powerful impact on the political union of the two nations, but was interpreted differently by Czechs and Slovak autonomists. The author also searched for instances of omitting the name “Slovaks” in various endeavours of Czech politicians or deliberately not using the hyphen in the state's name, Czecho-Slovakia, and replacing it by the name Czechoslovakia, which suggested the existence of one, Czechoslovak, rather than two – Czech and Slovak – nations. The author did not prejudge the direction of Slovaks' identity transformation, emphasising that it would depend on themselves.

On the other hand, Józef Gołąbek, a Slavist from the University of Warsaw, was firmly convinced of the Slovaks' national autonomy.<sup>66</sup> In the first chapter of his work entitled *Życie polityczne Słowaków* [*The Political Life of Slovaks*]<sup>67</sup> the author characterised the situation of Slovaks during the Hungarian period in great detail, criticising the policy of Magyarisation, detaining nationalist activists and political discrimination against Slovaks. In his opinion, this resulted in Slovaks' low national awareness and political passivity. This is how he explained Russia's influence on Slovaks (it bankrolled Slovak pro-Russian activists) and looking for Czech support (by members of the younger generation). Gołąbek devoted the second chapter of his work to the period of the First World War. Unlike other Polish authors, this scholar did not focus on Masaryk's activity, but on the attitudes and actions of Slovaks. He wrote, for example, about the rebellion of the Slovak

64. H. Batowski, *Wzajemność słowiańska. Problemy polityczne i kulturalne w przeszłości i teraźniejszości*, “Bellona” 35 (1930), pp. 335–382.

65. Idem, *Unja czesko-słowacka*, Warszawa 1931.

66. S. Wierczyński, *Gołąbek Józef*, in: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 8, Wrocław 1959, pp. 244–245.

67. J. Gołąbek, *Życie polityczne Słowaków*, “Nasza Przyszłość” 40 (1934), pp. 32–64.

71<sup>st</sup> Regiment of the Austro-Hungarian army from Trenčín; about Slovak activists in the Habsburg Monarchy who carried out negotiations with Czechs, led by Vavro Šrobár; and about Hungarians counteracting these efforts. Gołąbek's work also included the most comprehensive description so far of the history of Slovak emigration to America and its relations with Czechs. Gołąbek identified Milan Rastislav Štefánik as the greatest Slovak hero of the Great War, emphasising his contributions to creating a Czechoslovak army in Russia. The last chapter of this study is devoted to the situation of Slovaks after the First World War, but he did not regard the autonomist movement as revolutionary but rather as demanding equality of rights.

Finally, we should mention Władysław Semkowicz, a historian from the Jagiellonian University and probably the most important figure associated with the Slavic Society in Kraków, as well as the Society of Polish Tatra Highlanders (*Związek Podhalań*) and the Society of Southern Borderland (*Towarzystwo Kresów Południowych*). His activity combined two contradictory aspects. First of all, he worked for the benefit of the lost Polish Southern Borderland, and secondly for a cultural closeness between Poles and Slovaks (e.g. by assisting Slovaks in obtaining scholarships in Poland).<sup>68</sup> As a result, his thought exhibits a certain inconsistency. Semkowicz's greatest achievement in the field of popularising knowledge about Slovaks in Poland was a two-volume book which he edited, entitled *Słowacja i Słowacy* [*Slovakia and Slovaks*], published in 1937–1938.<sup>69</sup> Especially the second volume of this publication is very interesting, as it contains texts about history and history of literature. Semkowicz also wrote an article, later published as a stand-alone booklet, entitled *Polacy i Słowacy w dziejowym stosunku* [*Poles and Slovaks in a Historical Relation*].<sup>70</sup> Two other texts (also published as stand-alone copies) were devoted to the establishment of Czechoslovakia. The history of Slovaks prior to 1918 was discussed by František Hrušovský<sup>71</sup> (one of Semkowicz's former visiting students) and the interwar period was examined by Henryk Batowski.<sup>72</sup> The years of the First World

68. W. Bieńkowski, *Semkowicz Władysław*, in: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 36, Warszawa—Kraków 1995–1996, p. 236; T.M. Trajdos, *Władysław Semkowicz wobec Słowacji*, in: *Od poznania do zrozumienia...*, op. cit., pp. 109–115.

69. *Słowacja i Słowacy*, ed. W. Semkowicz, vol. 1–2, Kraków 1937–1938.

70. W. Semkowicz, *Polacy i Słowacy w dziejowym stosunku*, Kraków 1938.

71. F. Hrušovský, *Zarys dziejów słowackich do r. 1918*, Kraków 1938.

72. H. Batowski, *Zarys dziejów Słowacji w ostatnim dwudziestolecu (1918–1937)*, Kraków 1938.

War were described very briefly by the former author. Hrušovský mentioned the role of Slovak emigration, especially General Štefánik in France, and listed the most important Czech-Slovak proclamations and agreements from the times of the Great War. However, he avoided passing judgement on Slovaks' relationship with Czechs, only stressing that the former decided independently to participate in building a united state. Henryk Batowski expressed more forceful (also in comparison to his earlier work) opinions; in the foreword to his work, he emphasised that it was written "from the vantage point of complete independence of Slovak politics." He insinuated that previous literature about Slovakia either originated from "the Czech-Slovak position or from the Hungarian-Slovak point of view (...)",<sup>73</sup> while he wanted to follow the rule of "the golden mean." In his text, he presented a balanced description of all Slovak political movements from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He mentioned supporters of the Czechoslovak option, Russophiles and Hlinka's autonomists, as well as followers of Milan Hodža, the co-author of the plan to rebuild the Habsburg Monarchy in the spirit of a federation, which was supported by Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Batowski perceived Hodža in the Habsburg period as a true statesman who fought for Slovakia's autonomy. He reasoned that his transition to the pro-Czech camp was caused by the desire to improve Slovaks' life. He made interesting reflections about the proclamation of the Slovak National Party in Turčianský Svätý Martin on 24 May 1918, noting that on the one hand Slovaks emphasised their independence as a nation, and on the other hand they demanded an equal status in the future Czechoslovak state to Czechia, Moravia and Silesia, which placed them not as an equal partner to Czechs but as one of the four entities. He emphasised the significance of the speech made by the Slovak delegate to the Parliament in Budapest, Ferdinand Juriga, on 19 October 1918, in which the politician stressed the separateness of the Slovak nation and the will to break off ties with Hungary while maintaining friendly relations. The victory of the Czechoslovak option among the Slovak political elites was caused, according to him, by the fact that Juriga's proposal was rejected by Hungarians, although he also recalled the tardy projects by Oskar Jászi, the Hungarian Minister of Nationalities, aimed at ensuring equal rights to Slovaks and all the other nations of the Crown of St. Stephen. Interestingly, apart from the Hungarian factor, which allegedly led Slovaks

73. Ibidem, p. 5.

to look for Czech support, the author also mentioned the rivalry with Poles over Spiš and Orava. He also criticised the internal affairs in Czechoslovakia. Batowski especially noted the religious conflict, not even between Catholics and Protestants, but between Catholics and leftists. Batowski summed up his work with reflections on the future of Slovakia, wondering whether Slovaks would opt for separateness from Czechs. In that case, the thesis about one Czechoslovak nation would be defeated.

## 5. The pro-Slovak and anti-Czech Orientation

At this point it should be noted that in the 1930s, especially at the end of the decade, the interest in Slovakia markedly increased in Poland. First of all, the previously popular writing about "Slovak Land"<sup>74</sup> — an ambiguous geographical region, which had been an object rather than a subject of politics so far — was gradually abandoned. Now, the Polish government became more interested in Slovakia as a possible political subject. This was caused by a number of reasons. Firstly, Czechoslovakia signed a mutual assistance pact with the USSR (16 May 1935), so Poland was in danger of being surrounded in the south and east, which had been feared before. Secondly, in 1932 Józef Beck became the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs; he was the future author of the idea of "Third Europe" (Baltic-to-Black Sea or Intermarium) and a propagator of the so-called campaign for close relations with Slovakia.<sup>75</sup> Importantly, his project of alliances between East Central European states did not include Czechoslovakia, from whose rule he wanted to liberate its eastern territories. Initially, he intended for Slovakia to be in a union with Hungary but with time he started to support its full independence.<sup>76</sup> A symptom of the government's support for closer relations between Poles and Slovaks was the establishment in 1936 of the Ludovít Štur Society of Friends of Slovaks (*Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Słowaków im. Ludovita Štura*), affiliated with the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which had branches in Kraków, Poznań, Częstochowa, Katowice and Cieszyn. Wacław Łaciński, the Polish consul in Bratislava, played an important role in this organisation.<sup>77</sup>

74. See "Słowaczyna" czy "Słowacja", "Ziemia Podhalańska" 6 (1936), pp. 14–15.

75. M. Gniazdowski, *Kwestia słowacka...*, op. cit., p. 173; idem, *Zbliżowacia akcja...*, op. cit., p. 41–52.

76. M. Kornat, *Minister Józef Beck a sprawa słowacka. Refleksje i spostrzeżenia*, "Kontakty" 16 (2018), p. 99–107.

77. E. Orłof, *Uwarunkowania polityczne polsko-słowackich kontaktów kulturalnych w dwudziestolecie międzywojennym (ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem pracy konsu-*

In 1937 his deputy, Zbigniew Jakubski, published (under the pen name "Kazimierz Niepokoyczycki") a booklet entitled *Słowacy i Czesi. Zarys stosunków* [*Slovaks and Czechs: An Outline of Relations*],<sup>78</sup> in which the Czech policy regarding the Slovak population was depicted as a reflection of Czech national egoism. In other words, the so-called "Czechoslovak mutuality" meant little more than Czech chauvinism to him. He expressed regret that, due to the outbreak of the First World War, Hlinka did not have the time to ensure the Slovak population's national awareness, because Hungarian repressions after 1914 forced Slovaks to look for Czech help. For Jakubski, General Štefánik was a model of Slovak patriot, thanks to whom, according to the author, Czechs obtain French support for their plans of liberating Czech and Slovak territories from the Habsburg rule. The booklet also included an analysis of individual agreements and Czech-Slovak cooperation during the First World War. However, the author criticised those Slovaks who went over to the Czech side, especially Šrobár and Hodža. Importantly, Jakubski regarded the decisions of the National Assembly in Prague of 14 November 1918, which proclaimed the establishment of Czechoslovakia, as invalid. He supported this assessment by arguing that Slovaks were represented in the Assembly by 30 Protestants and only 10 Catholics, while 70 per cent of the population was Catholic and supported the autonomist movement of Father Hlinka, and Protestants were a clear minority in the Slovak population.

Approximately at the same time, a work critical of Czechs was also written by Waław Łypacewicz, a lawyer, a peasant party politician and pacifist.<sup>79</sup> The book *Stosunki polsko-czeskie* [*Polish-Czech Relations*]<sup>80</sup> accused Czechs (especially Masaryk) of imperialism, of which Slovaks were the victims. The author treated the establishment of Czechoslovakia as a result of the efforts of Czech political leaders in support of Czechoslovakism during the First World War.

There were more similar works. In 1936 Tadeusz Stapiński, a son of a well-known peasant party politician from Galicia (Jan Stapiński, the

*latów polskich w Słowacji*), in: *Polsko-słowackie stosunki po roku 1918*, eds. H. Mieczkowska, J. Hvišč, Wrocław 2002, p. 157; M. Gniazdowski, "Zbliżovacia akcia"..., op. cit., p. 47 ff.

78. [Z. Jakubski], *Słowacy i Czesi. Zarys stosunków*, Warszawa 1937.

79. Z. Landau, Łypacewicz Waław, in: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 18, Wrocław 1973, pp. 597–598.

80. W. Łypacewicz, *Stosunki polsko-czeskie*, Warszawa 1936.

founder of the Polish People's Party 'Left') published (under the pen name "Tomasz Janowicz") an extensive work entitled *Czesi. Studium historyczno-polityczne* [Czechs: A Historical and Political Study].<sup>81</sup> It included words of criticism addressed to Czechs for their Russophilism, anti-Polonism and the occupation of Silesian Cieszyn, but also for their attitude towards Slovaks. The author wrote: "It is difficult to imagine a more moving tragedy than the tragedy of the Slovak nation, and a greater betrayal and political crime than the betrayal and crime committed by Czechs against the courageous Slovak nation."<sup>82</sup> In particular, he discussed Slovaks' relentless resistance against the policy of Magyarisation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Among Slovak heroes, Stapiński mentioned Hlinka ("Slovak warrior") and Štefánik, whose tragic death in an aviation accident he interpreted as an assassination carried out by Czechs. He ascribed the beginning of the "Czech avalanche" to that moment; by this term he understood the inflow of 250,000 Czech settlers to Slovakia. Stapiński evaluated the years after 1918 — not mincing words — as Czech occupation of Slovakia. He used an analogy to the history of Poland to compare it to the presence of Russians in Congress Poland. He regarded the thesis about the existence of a Czechoslovak nation as nonsense, and comparing the situation of Slovaks during the Hungarian and Czechoslovak period he assessed the former as decidedly better. He believed that Poland had a special role to play in the future liberation of Slovakia, but at the same time condemned the slogan of "Slavic mutuality," which he interpreted as a reflection of Panslavism.

Finally, we should mention the work of Adolf Bocheński entitled *Między Niemcami a Rosją* [Between Germany and Russia], published in 1937,<sup>83</sup> which was a comprehensive analysis of possible directions for Polish foreign policy makers.<sup>84</sup> The author, a conservatist, supporter of Piłsudski and Beck, but most importantly an insightful analyst of international relations,<sup>85</sup>

81. [T. Stapiński], T. Janowicz, *Czesi. Studium historyczno-polityczne*, Kraków 1936.

82. Ibidem, p. 101.

83. A. Bocheński, *Między Niemcami a Rosją*, Warszawa 1937, pp. 137–152.

84. M. Zakrzewski, *Konserwatyzm czy rewolucja? Próba klasyfikacji ideowej środowiska "Buntu Młodych" i "Polityki" (1931–1939)*, "Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość" 2 (30/2017), pp. 53–54.

85. For more on the topic of Bocheński as a political writer see: A. Kosicka-Pajewska, *Polska między Rosją a Niemcami. Koncepcje polityczne Adolfa Bocheńskiego*, Poznań 1992, pp. 11–24; M. Zakrzewski, *Adolf Bocheński a pułkownik Beck*, in: A. Bocheński, *Między Niemcami a Rosją. Wybór pism*, select., introd. and ed. by M. Zakrzewski, Kraków 2019, pp. vii–xxi.

examined Poland's various options of building international alliances in the face of the German and Soviet threats. The work also included a broader reference to Polish-Czech relations and the Slovak problem. The analysis of the situation of the Slovak nation presented in his work was very interesting. Bocheński noted that there was an enormous threat to keeping a separate Slovak national identity in a state shared with Czechs. He claimed that Czechs achieved their successful assimilation plan not by means of a repressive policy (like Hungarians had done previously) but by means of their liberalism, which enabled Slovaks and Czechs to blend rather naturally in the newly established state. Moreover, he emphasised that Czechs managed to win Slovaks over by proving that the Magyar domination in Upper Hungary before the First World War had been a great threat to Slovak culture. However, he noted that although Czechs and Hungarians were similar in their assimilation policies aimed at the Slovak population, Slovaks and Czechs shared no diplomatic interests. It was obvious to Bocheński that in the case of Germany's or the USSR's war against Poland, Czechoslovakia would become an ally of the former states. Therefore, he deemed it necessary for Poland to help Slovakia achieve full independence, which would provide a basis for its alliance with Poland.

In 1938, one more interesting book came out — a reportage written by a journalist and political commentator Waław Filochowski,<sup>86</sup> entitled *Cierpkie pobratymstwo* [*Bitter Kinship*].<sup>87</sup> The author analysed the condition of the young Czechoslovak state, pointing out a number of problems both in its relations with Poland (the conflict about Cieszyn Silesia) and internal problems with Slovaks, Ruthenians and Germans. He also included historical references. The author reproached Masaryk, Beneš and other Czechoslovak leaders either for their socialist views, which put the state under the influence of Soviet communists, or for their dependence on Freemasonry. The author stressed that Czechs, as the dominant group in the state, failed at blending Czechs and Slovaks into one nation. Filochowski described Slovakia through the prism of Hlinka, whom he had met personally and who made an enormous impression on him, and of the books he had read, written mainly by a Slovak Polonophile, Karol Sidor. The value of this work to Polish

86. P. Grzegorzczak, *Filochowski Waław*, in: *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 6, Kraków 1948, pp. 463–464.

87. W. Filochowski, *Cierpkie pobratymstwo*, Warszawa 1938.



readers was that it vividly depicted the actual national mood in Slovakia on the eve of the Second World War.

## 6. Conclusion

The presented works devoted to the Slovak issue in the context of the establishment of Czechoslovakia reveal fundamentally different pictures of the Second Polish Republic's southern neighbour. While to supporters of friendly Polish-Czech relations Slovaks were merely a branch of the Czechoslovak nation, the other authors generally did not doubt in Slovaks' national separateness from Czechs, although their assessments of the Czechoslovak state varied. To many scholars studying Slavdom the fact that Czechoslovakia was created meant that it could be the starting point for establishing closer relations between Slavs in Europe in general, but it could not mean underappreciating any of the Slavic nations. Slovakia's separateness from Czechia was articulated both by supporters of cooperation with Hungary and by the pro-government camp in the 1930s, although their ideas of the future of the state "liberated" from Czechs were different. Representatives of various orientations were unanimous in some aspects, while they differed in other matters. What they all shared were references to Slovakia's past. The history of Slovaks in the times of Hungary, the First World War, and during the period of building the First Czechoslovak Republic was referenced. These historical reminiscences and evaluations of the key figures and events were not meant to serve purely educational purposes, but mainly to support a specific author's vision of the future order in Central Europe. Slovakia, which in 1918 was only just entering the arena of European politics, unexpectedly became an important link in planning the region's future — at least through Polish eyes.

History showed that, as a result of Jozef Tiso's Slovakia joining the Axis Powers, the pro-Slovak option, which had been the most popular in Poland in the last years before the outbreak of the Second World War, ultimately had to be rejected in favour of the idea proposed by the London government-in-exile, which disassociated itself from Piłsudski's followers. The London government proposed creating a Polish-Czechoslovak alliance or even federation as a counterbalance to Germany.<sup>88</sup> After the war ended, on the other hand, if problems of the old Czechoslovak state (including Slovak-Czech

88. Cf. [S. Sopicki], K. Leskowiec, *Ku federacji z Czechosłowacją*, Londyn 1941.

relations) were examined, Germany was usually named as the culprit.<sup>89</sup> In the new geopolitical reality, Germany was to be counterbalanced by a union of Slavic nations, which was, after all, clearly marked by the iron curtain. After Germany's defeat against the USSR, Batowski's old idea of Slavic mutuality took on an entirely new meaning.<sup>90</sup> In the context of Czechoslovakia, however, it did not mean a return to pushing the idea of Czechoslovakism — on the contrary, now the separateness of the two nations was emphasised. It remains a fact, however, that history came a full circle and after the Second World War Polish authors wrote about Slovaks' past treating it as an inseparable part of the history of Czechoslovakia.<sup>91</sup> If Slovaks were paid a little more attention, usually the focus was on criticising the circles of Hlinka and his political heir, Tiso.<sup>92</sup> This, however, is a topic for another discussion.

*Translated by Anna Sosenko*

- 89. Cf. M.S. Korowicz, *Dzisiejsza Czechosłowacja z I mapką*, Katowice 1948; M.S. Korowicz, *Zarys dziejów Słowacji*, Katowice—Wrocław 1948.
- 90. H. Batowski, *Współpraca słowiańska. Zagadnienia polityczne, kulturalne i gospodarcze w przeszłości i teraźniejszości*, Warszawa 1946; H. Batowski, *Związły zarys dziejów Słowiańszczyzny*, Kraków 1948.
- 91. Cf. T. Lehr-Splawiński, K. Piwarski, Z. Wojciechowski, *Polska—Czechy. Dziesięć wieków sąsiedztwa*, ed. Z. Wojciechowski, Katowice—Wrocław 1947; R. Heck, M. Orzechowski, *Historia Czechosłowacji*, Wrocław—Warszawa 1969.
- 92. E.g. L. Wolanowski, *Śladami brudnej sprawy*, Warszawa 1954; I. Stanek, *Zdrada i upadek. Z dziejów ruchu ludackiego w Słowacji*, Warszawa 1962.

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# Abstract

Adam Świątek

*Three Histories of One Slovakia. Polish Interwar Writings on the Slovaks' Situation in the Face of the Collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy*

The aim of this article is to show the attitude of Polish interwar literature (political commentary, historiography) towards the role of Slovaks in building the First Czechoslovak Republic and their situation in the state they shared with Czechs. The collected material has been divided into three categories: pro-Hungarian, pro-Czech (pro-Czechoslovak) and pro-Slovak, but the author also notes an interest in Slovakia related to the Slavic studies conducted during the Second Polish Republic. The works discussed in this article attempted to compare the Slovaks' situation under the Hungarian rule and in Czechoslovakia; to answer the question whether the Czechoslovak nation existed; and to suggest with whom the Polish state should see its future on the international arena (support Hungary's aspirations to recover Slovakia, establish good relations with Prague, or support the Slovak nationalist movement against Czechs).

**Keywords:**

First Czechoslovak Republic, Polish-Czech relations, Polish-Slovak relations, historiography, political commentary, Second Polish Republic

# Abstrakt

Adam Świątek

*Trzy historie jednej Słowacji. O polskim piśmiennictwie okresu międzywojennego na temat sytuacji Słowaków w obliczu upadku monarchii habsburskiej*

**Słowa kluczowe:**

I Republika  
Czechosłowacka,  
stosunki polsko-  
-czeskie, stosunki  
polsko-słowackie,  
historiografia,  
publicystyka,  
II Rzeczpospolita  
Polska

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest ukazanie stosunku polskiego piśmiennictwa okresu międzywojennego (publicystyki, historiografii) wobec roli Słowaków w dziele budowy I Republiki Czechosłowackiej oraz ich sytuacji we wspólnym z Czechami państwie. Zebrany materiał podzielono zasadniczo na trzy nurty: filowęgierski, filoczeski (filoczechosłowacki), filosłowacki, ale zwrócono także uwagę na zainteresowania Słowacją w ramach prowadzonych w II RP badań słowianoznawczych. Omawiane w niniejszym artykule prace starały się porównać położenie Słowaków pod panowaniem węgierskim oraz w czasach czechosłowackich, odpowiedzieć na pytanie o to czy istnieje naród czechosłowacki, w końcu wskazać, z kim państwo polskie powinno wiązać swoją przyszłość na arenie międzynarodowej (wspierać aspiracje Węgier do odzyskania Słowacji, ułożyć poprawne stosunki z Pragą, czy może wspierać narodowy ruch słowacki przeciwko Czechom).